

Introduction

Many influential recent studies of the dawn of Modernism have drawn on linguistic models to chart the radical shifts in systems of thought and knowledge inaugurating that period. Walter J. Ong's seminal study of Ramism and its aftermath, for example, traces the transition from the mid and late Renaissance to the seventeenth century, not in terms of the birth of a new scientifying and rationalist spirit, but in terms of the redefinition of the inner articulation of the trivium. The Ramist tradition inherited by the seventeenth century announces the decisive shift to the "visual," analytic, and referential function of language, which supplants the "aural" function, a shift that is marked by the privileged position accorded to dialectic, or logic, within the trivium. Rhetoric in its traditional form is deprived of any claim to its own forms of discursive reasoning and places of invention, which become the sole province of dialectic. The privileged place accorded to logic does not signal the triumph of reason over deluded, misguided rhetorical opinion but marks the newly granted preeminence of one form of discourse. The distinction that Ong draws between the Ramist revolution, in which the sciences of language are governed by dialectic, and the previous period, in which rhetoric coexisted as logic's discursive rival, is founded on the difference between cognitive or constative and performative modalities of language; between language as a referential system and language as a phenomenon of code. Indeed, Ong insists on the central distinction between language as "visualized" and "spatialized" logic that gives access to knowledge of the outside world, and anti-Ramist rhetorical language, whose central predicates are its "auditory" and "oral" functions. The traditional rhetoric is here defined not in terms of reference to the outside world but in terms of its status as a linguistic act of enunciation. This difference is exemplified by Ong's analysis of the dual status of the propositional judgment, which functions both as a referential statement and, in binding subject and predicate by the copula, as a performative judicial act, the enunciation of a *praedicatum*; that is, the linguistic act of speaking out or accusing something of something else.¹ In a similar vein, Ong argues that the status of the linguistic sign must be considered according to two aspects: 1),

according to its spatio-visual and referential function as sign of something; and 2), according to its aural function, that is, the use of the linguistic sign in a particular act of enunciation.² The Ramist assertion of the priority of the former over the latter function announces the triumph of dialectic over the traditional rhetoric, of the spatio-visual mode of discourse over the aural-oral mode. Within the trivium, rhetoric is now reduced to *elocutio*, to striking expression, style, and ornament that serves as ancillary supplement to logic and its complementary grammar. Ramism marks the realignment of the sciences of language dominated by logic, a shift inherited by and further refined in the Cartesian seventeenth century.

The use of linguistic models for delimiting the dawn of Modernism also marks a project as distinct from Ong's version of the history of ideas as Michel Foucault's earlier works. In those studies of epistemological procedures and the subtending "archaeological" conditions of knowledge in the Classical age, and particularly in *Les Mots et les choses*, Foucault maintains that representation is the principal feature of the Classical *epistémê* because signs are no longer part of the world, a world conceived as a configuration of interglossing signs that are governed by symbolic resemblance and analogical participation. In the Classical age, signs no longer participate in things but instead "represent" things as plural and discrete entities and in a separate but transparent medium whose privileged form is language. The system of representation automatically involves analysis of what it represents and leads to the incremental ordering of word-things among themselves according to characteristic differences to form in its totality a "grid." The transparent adequation between the whole grid and the totality of things constitutes the overarching identity upon which all particular knowledge rests. What is of particular interest in Foucault's analysis is not simply the originary place of language in the Classical system of representation, but the fact that the Classical *epistémê* finds its privileged expression for Foucault in Cartesian *logiques* and neo-Cartesian grammars of the period—and most notably in the *Grammaire de Port-Royal* and the *Logique de Port-Royal*.³ The Foucauldian Classical *epistémê* is dependent on the dyadic linguistic sciences of logic and grammar. The third member of the trivium is accorded space within the field of representation only as a secondary and derivative element.⁴

In these two divergent accounts, the dawn of Modernism in the seventeenth century is delimited with reference to a new inner-articulation of the trivium and to the modalities of thought, knowledge, and discourse that this shift makes possible. Here periodization is not founded on a global, and often intangible, new scientific spirit or rationalism of Modernism, but rather such topical headings are first a function of the new preeminence accorded in the sciences of language to logic and of its dyadic pairing with grammar. In the seventeenth century, logic,

as Paul de Man has argued, is the site of the bridging of the field of language with knowledge of the outside world.⁵ As the premier science of language, logic is the area where linguistic discourse about itself matches up with the rigor of epistemological discourse about the outside world. This shift represents a compelling version of the continuity of a theory of language, as logic, and knowledge of the phenomenal world; language becomes a purely cognitive system. Although logic bears a strong affinity with grammar, rhetoric exists no longer as a separate and rival member of the trivium that governs and produces its own discursive reasonings, but instead it serves an ancillary and secondary function within the trivium. Fulfilling the promise of Ramism, rhetoric becomes a mere aesthetic adjunct, an ornament within the semantic. Eloquence is now a mere aesthetic supplement in the service of what has become known, after Pierre Kuentz, as the bivium of the seventeenth century, that is, the sciences of language dominated by logic and grammar.⁶ Rhetoric reduced to the domain of *elocutio* becomes increasingly restricted to formal devices codifiable within style, manner, and expression. Within language as a cognitive system governed by logic and grammar, the place of rhetoric is preordained as a supplementary aesthetic phenomenon. Indeed, Marc Fumaroli's exhaustive documentation has shown that the extensive debates of the early and mid seventeenth century on eloquence in civil society, on eloquence of the sacred, and on eloquence of the court are primarily concerned with the norms of style.⁷ A handful of rhetorics such as René Bary's *Rhétorique française*, Le Gras's *Rethorique française*, and the anonymous *Abrégé de rhétorique* would seem to delimit rhetoric according to its more extended traditional definition, as A. Kibédi-Varga has argued.⁸ The discussions of *inventio* and *dispositio* in those texts do not, however, succeed in extending the field of rhetoric. The discourses that these rhetorics regulate enunciate the truth of things; these discourses do not speak with the performative and hortatory force of the traditional rhetoric. It is also important to note that the examples of rhetorical reasoning listed by Kibédi-Varga are in fact contested by the very texts that he cites. Kibédi-Varga refers to sections of the *Logique de Port-Royal* on syllogistic reasoning as illustrations of rhetorical reasoning,⁹ but for the logicians such syllogisms are merely *stylized* translations of the syllogisms of logic. Thus, for the logicians, the rhetorical enthymeme is an ellipsis of the extended syllogism of logic.¹⁰ And although it may well be true that the history of rhetoric, as it runs its course into the twentieth century, is one of diminishing and exhausted figural resources,¹¹ in the seventeenth century rhetoric governed style and manner of discourse via an extensive system of figures at every level of structural organization, from the isolated ornament to syntagmatic unities of all dimensions, including a discourse in its entirety.¹² Rhetoric now func-

tions, as Roland Barthes has remarked, according to the fundamental principle of stylistic and aesthetic exteriority to thought.¹³

The dawn of Modernism in the mid-seventeenth century is marked by a decisive shift in the articulation of the sciences of language that establishes the definitive turning point in the history of rhetoric: this discipline is reduced to an aesthetic and formal supplement to discourse in an age when aesthetic, poetic, and rhetorical doctrine begin to converge. The realignment of the trivium finds its privileged expression in the interdependent monuments of the *petites écoles* of Port-Royal, the *Logique de Port-Royal* and the *Grammaire de Port-Royal*, originally published in 1662 and 1660 respectively. These manuals are true to the Cartesian times in constructing the essential bivium for language as a cognitive system. Although the extended project of a secondary and supplementary rhetoric was left to Bernard Lamy, who consciously linked rhetoric to the art of thought elaborated in the *Logique de Port-Royal*, Port-Royal's logic and grammar allotted the space necessary to the treatment of rhetoric. In this context, the preliminary discourse to the second edition of the *Logique de Port-Royal* boldly announces that the text examines as an ancillary and supplementary field everything that needs to be said about the proper use and the abuse of rhetoric (*Logique de Port-Royal*, 30). Again, it is hardly surprising that the analysis of the proper use of rhetoric in that text and also in the *Grammaire de Port-Royal* is limited to the regulation of aesthetic ornaments in discourse. Rhetoric in the *Logique de Port-Royal* is determined to be an aesthetic and sensory element of language capable of producing an affective response and of expressing a passion as an "accessory idea" that supplements the primary meaning vehiculated. In this manner, the logicians, true to the often conflictual nature of their sources, attempt to reconcile within rhetorical doctrine both the Augustinian and the Cartesian division of man into body and mind, passion or will and rational faculties of the understanding. The ornamental and aesthetic function of the rhetorical supplement finds its model in the *Logique de Port-Royal* in such traditional topoi as expressive color/cognitive and representational drawing in painting, affective manner/thought, the imaginary/knowledge and reason. The logicians Arnauld and Nicole mobilize all of these well-known categories in order to delimit rhetoric as the aesthetic supplement to thought in discourse.

The discussion in the *Logique de Port-Royal* on the proper use of rhetoric delimits the productive forms of eloquence, but the logicians' critique of the abuse of rhetoric, and often in somewhat concealed form, is central to the consolidation of language as a cognitive system. To begin with, the logicians target the remnants of the traditional rhetoric of persuasion in Ramist and derivative logics. If Ramus can be cited, as he is in the studies of Ong and Howell,¹⁴ as a source of the redefinition of the sciences of language, this

dialectician is the subject of excoriating criticism in the *Logique de Port-Royal*. Arnauld and Nicole purge their logic of the last elements of the traditional rhetoric that are present in Ramist dialectic. Thus, the authors of the *Logique de Port-Royal* excise Ramist topology from logic because such places of invention are artificial and unnecessary since reason itself discovers *naturally* the sources of invention in accordance with the true order of things (*Logique de Port-Royal*, 232-34). Similarly, the logicians argue that the disposition of judgments and discursive reasonings should not be governed by the artificial rules of Ramus but again by the natural order of things.¹⁵ In this way, the logicians proclaim that they, unlike their predecessors, have instituted the first true logic that has decisively broken the final links with the artifices of the traditional rhetoric.

Arnauld and Nicole's success in refining the projects of previous logicians and in restricting rhetoric to the status of ornamental and aesthetic device that supplements the sciences of logic and grammar is only achieved by the operation, in less overt fashion, of the marginalization of two central attributes of the rhetorical. First, in constructing language as a cognitive system, the logicians evict from the trivium all traces of the traditional rhetoric as persuasive discursive reasoning. The logicians' attacks on Ramism do not simply represent an attempt to refine logic; their critique is part of a broader strategy to discredit and exclude an entire class of discourse deemed to be rhetorical. This more extensive and threatening form of rhetoric is not simply abandoned because absolutism had eliminated the very institutions necessary to polemical rhetorical debate, as Fénelon, echoing Tacitus's argument in the *Dialogue on Oratory*, was to proclaim in the *Lettre à l'Académie*,¹⁶ but because of the epistemological status of such persuasive rhetorical discourse. In the preliminary discourse of the second edition of the *Logique de Port-Royal*, the logicians begin their analysis with a reference to Aristotle as the codifier of the traditional rhetoric, whose primary feature is its dependence on the passions (*Logique de Port-Royal*, 33). In Arnauld and Nicole's interpretation of Aristotelian doctrine, rhetorical discourse aims to achieve practical valorizations in terms of pleasure and pain, and these in turn are imposed on and shape the being of the world. The traditional rhetoric of persuasion is merely the source of illusion and epistemological error, and the logicians move actively to exclude it from the sciences of language.

The logicians' second attempt to marginalize a potentially threatening element of rhetoric occurs in their delimitation of the field of eloquence as style and ornament. In their analysis, the authors of the *Logique de Port-Royal* tendentiously favor examples of figural constructions, such as hyperbaton, to the trope in order to underscore the ornament's bipartite functions as expression of manner and vehicle of univocal meaning. This is the assumption necessary to their doctrines of figurative language and the accessory idea, which, in the case of

rhetoric, comes under the heading of passionate and accessory manner in which a primary idea, the true semantic component of a word or phrase, is conceived. The figure marks the perfect conjunction and hierarchization of the semantic and the subordinate aesthetic components of language. The logicians subsume tropes under the generic heading of figure and assert that those ornaments do not function as agents of semantic displacement but as signs capable of vehiculating a primary—and in this case, figural—semantic content while producing the appropriate aesthetic effect. In this way most problems concerning tropological displacement are sidestepped by reducing the trope to the dyadic relations of aesthetic or expressive value and meaning. It is for this reason that the logicians distinguish figural language in general from mere ambiguity and polysemy. Provided that the trope is contextually situated, the link between sign and meaning is unproblematic, and the trope, like all figures, is univocal. In the *Logique de Port-Royal* Arnauld and Nicole do not account for the trope in terms of deflection, in terms of semantic slippage from literal to figurative or of the motion from primary to secondary meaning, but instead in terms of the relation of the ornamental sign, with its own virtual aesthetic power, and meaning. The *Logique de Port-Royal* reduces the semantic doubleness of the trope to the copresence of the inherent aesthetic force of the sign itself and the meaning vehiculated. This explains why the logicians accord such importance in the *Logique de Port-Royal* to color and drawing in painting as a model for the rhetorical ornament in general. This mimetic art illustrates the ability of the rhetorical, aesthetic ornament to produce an effect as the sensuous element of language and to represent its idea or object.

The Port-Royal logicians' concise analysis of rhetoric is certainly a reflection of its secondary and derivative status in the sciences of language. Although Arnauld and Nicole in the *Logique de Port-Royal* claim, in delimiting the proper use and abuse of rhetoric, to have said in short-hand fashion all that is necessary to say about the subject, their efforts open the way to a discourse that would complete the delimitation of the third and supplementary member of the trivium. The *Logique de Port-Royal* itself directs us to such a discourse by issuing as an *a parte* the well-known reference to “feu Monsieur Pascal qui savait autant de véritable rhétorique que personne n'en ait jamais su” (*Logique de Port-Royal*, 267). This brief mention of and homage to Pascal's mastery of rhetoric is seconded by innumerable examples of contemporary testimony, such as those offered in the biographical tributes by his sister Gilberte Périer¹⁷ and by Pierre Nicole,¹⁸ the tributes cited by Pascal himself in the *Lettres provinciales* and generally ascribed to Scudéry and Chapelain,¹⁹ all of which, with mounting fervor, proclaim Pascal to be the master rhetor of Port-Royal and of the age. And in fact, the successive line of praise for Pascal as the exemplary rhetor of the period ex-

tends to Roland Barthes, who not only heralds Pascal's absolute mastery of the new manneristic and stylistic rhetoric of the seventeenth century but also names him the first to formulate and codify its laws.²⁰ It would seem to be the case that Pascal, implicitly the source of the logicians' analysis, seconds and extends their remarks on rhetoric in general by his practice of eloquence and in his speculative writings. Thus, the second part of Pascal's treatise entitled *Réflexions sur la géométrie en général*, which is devoted to the art of persuasion, delimits rhetorical persuasion in terms of the seductive language of the will, and the analysis insists on the power of such rhetoric to mislead and to persuade of error. In the same treatise, Pascal argues for the domestication of rhetoric, which can become productive and serve the truth when it no longer labors in the service of the hortatory force of the will but serves an aesthetic and ornamental function as style whose effects are proportional to the subject of discourse.²¹

Pascal's speculation on the rhetorical and its productive functioning extends beyond that treatise to a nexus of fragments of the *Pensées* that develop similar points.²² Fragments 585/486 and 586/486, for example, represent the aesthetic manner of the rhetorical ornament according to the model of proportion and continuity between dress and body, outside and inside, the aesthetic function of the linguistic sign and the substance that it "clothes."²³ Rhetorical effects are measured by their power to produce an aesthetic response, and this art must be mastered in the same way that the musician masters his keyboard to produce similar effects (*Pensées*, 55/88). Eloquence, as we are told in fragment 667/547, requires the proper proportional relations of manner and substance in order to produce the perfect alliance of "l'agréable" and "le réel." Such an art stands opposed to eloquence founded on artifice and manneristic excess, and thus "la vraie éloquence se moque de l'éloquence" (*Pensées*, 513/671). Pascal's speculative writings are seconded by his practice of eloquence, from the polemical exchanges that constitute the core of his early scientific works to the two masterpieces of his oeuvre, the *Lettres provinciales* and the projected apology known as the *Pensées*.

My examination of Pascal and rhetoric follows in the wake of a number of studies focusing on the classification of stylistic devices and the regulatory laws of Pascalian eloquence²⁴ and on the articulation of his rhetoric with rational argumentation.²⁵ In all cases, such studies have underscored Pascal's central place at Port-Royal as rhetor, and all have helped to elucidate Pascal's exemplary de limitation of the subsidiary and supplementary aesthetic member of the trivium. Pascal makes possible the historical periodization of rhetoric and the new articulation of the trivium. My study of Pascal and rhetoric too would follow and expose the articulation of this exemplary rhetor's texts and a periodized rhetorical doctrine. We should not take for granted, however, this very point of articula-

tion, the very hinging within the title of the two domains to be analyzed. The very possibility of a periodized account of rhetoric, I will argue, is contested by the rhetoric of Pascal's texts themselves, by their production of rhetorical structures and modalities of signification. The articulation of Pascal—a corpus of texts—and a doctrine of rhetoric is contested by the emergence in those writings of the two marginalized and excluded forms of rhetoric despite prescription against them or vehement denegation.

As we have seen, the periodizing accounts of rhetoric turn eloquence into a purely aesthetic art. Within language conceived as a cognitive system, rhetoric functions as ornamentation within semantics. This account sidesteps the function of tropes as agents of semantic displacement. In the texts of Pascal, the exemplary rhetor, can the latter function be overlooked? There have been two answers to this question, and in both accounts we learn that the displacing action of tropes is an absolute feature of language. These two answers end in divergent accounts of the articulation of the texts of Pascal and rhetoric. In his seminal study of *La Métaphysique de Pascal*, Edouard Morot-Sir was the first to argue that the rhetoric of “figures,” or tropes, is an essential structural element of Pascal's thought. For Morot-Sir, the delimitation of Pascal's rhetorical doctrine is the only way to grasp the originality of his thought, which centers on the foundational insight that being is language for all reality outside of God. As being exists as a function of language, truth is characterized as the language of unequivocal and univocal meaning. The human language of multiplicity, contradiction, and dialectical tension underscores the necessarily rhetorical, or more precisely the figural, nature of the linguistic sign. Within the play of figural multiplicity, there is the need for a totalizing “point fixe” that unites all perspectives.²⁶ In Morot-Sir's account, figures are, for Pascal, directed to the totalizing and transcendent theological truth. Truth is given to man only in the language of God,²⁷ which accounts for and reconciles the division of human language and which assembles all figures within the totalizing, univocal truth.

By generalizing the rhetorical or the “figural” in language, Morot-Sir establishes a coherent rhetorical doctrine of Pascal, a doctrine that accounts for and is displayed in the corpus of his writings. But it is precisely the possibility of linguistic univocality, upon which Morot-Sir's account of rhetoric is dependent, that Sara Melzer calls into question in *Discourses of the Fall*. By careful exegesis of Pascal's *Pensées*, Melzer examines the ways in which this text is “about” its own rhetorical structures, and she concludes that for Pascal all human knowledge is founded on figures that serve as deflecting substitutes for truth. The Fall is a fall into language from truth and presence to God such that “all our statements about the human condition, God, and the fall itself are trapped in figures that say something other than what they appear to say.”²⁸ And because language

is made up of nothing but figures, “rhetoric replaces epistemology; instead of knowledge of God or truth, we have figures of God or truth.”²⁹ The predicament that Melzer describes is consistent with that of negative theology, according to which the quest for God or truth is always marked by the absence of the desired presence.³⁰ And this negative theology, in Melzer’s scheme, is founded on the fact that the transcendent truth, the univocal truth, is not available in language, which can only generate figures of this truth. But paradoxically, this very negative knowledge becomes the meaning or truth that the *Pensées* announces. If this is the case, then it is again possible to articulate the texts of the exemplary rhetor, Pascal, with a coherent doctrine of rhetoric, a *negative* doctrine of rhetoric. To claim that the writings of Pascal are “about” the absence of truth and the foundation of all language on displacing and substitutive figures is, nevertheless, to establish a coherent doctrine, albeit a negative doctrine, albeit the reversal of the contention of Morot-Sir. Melzer’s work is inscribed in a tradition according to which Pascal’s works constitute a conscious “critique” of the sign as representation and of language governed by logic and grammar. In such a position, the knowledge that all language is founded on figures culminates in a doctrine by which the rhetoric of figures usurps the priority of logic and grammar in founding the sciences of language.

It is such articulations of Pascal’s writings with doctrines of rhetoric, whether positive or negative, that I contest in the first section of this study. If, as I argue, all of Pascal’s epistemological discourses and metalinguistic cognitions on the rhetorical nature of language are already worked by figure, then we have to reconsider just what the status of such first and founding figures is. If we discover, through the analysis of Pascal’s texts, that language is always made up of figures, and if reference to the truth is always made via the detour of figure, then we can no longer understand such figures as the symmetrical opposite of truth, for they are always already put in the place of truth. Truth is always conditioned by the presence of figures that precede it and are put in its place, and consequently such figures can no longer serve as true figures for an unattained and inexpressible truth. Indeed, as Jacques Derrida has shown in “La Mythologie blanche,” in the context of the speculative philosophical discourse of truth, if figure cannot be held symmetrically against the concept and the proper from which or to which it is transported, and against which it is held according to such binary oppositions as proper/transposed, direct/deferred, primary/secondary meaning, then such figure cannot be a figure properly speaking but instead only a displaced version of itself.³¹ Figure can no longer function as a modification of meaning—transported, transposed, secondary, and so on—and can no longer labor as a deflecting bearer of sense for the inexpressible truth, but instead it must be “rethought” in terms of differential relation, in terms of the differential space

of displacement. Figure, “properly” speaking, would function as a differential marker, a mere placeholder. Such self-difference displays the always-otherness of the very structure of the figural sign. Marking opens a differential gap within the linguistic sign, the very nonclosural space of displacement or motion of the figure. Such figures or tropes do necessitate an error because the sign always requires a decision on meaning, whether positive in the manner of Morot-Sir or negative in the manner of Melzer, while at the same time disqualifying the outcome of such a decision as aberrant. In other words, such founding, first figures necessitate the error of always putting determinate meaning, whether positive or negative, whether truth or its absence, where there is only non-meaning; of putting meaning, whether positive or negative, where there is only differential marking. I analyze the texts of Pascal as the site that produces such figures, and I argue that such figures disrupt the attempt to subsume them under any closural doctrine or “theory” of referential signification, whether positive or negative.

In the second section of this study, I trace the emergence of the other form of marginalized rhetoric in Pascal’s writings, the rhetoric of persuasion. This form of rhetoric, as we have seen, concerns more than just the agreeable, seductive presence of ornaments and stylistic devices in discourse; it concerns instead an entire doctrine of discourse and discursive reasoning. A number of recent studies have attempted to circumscribe such rhetorical discourse in Pascal. Dominique Descotes, for example, has argued for extending the field of the rhetoric of persuasion in Pascal to all rational argumentation, to all discursive reasoning. Descotes claims that Pascal, inspired by the late-Renaissance rhetorician Du Vair, always aspired to “une rhétorique qui [a la fois technique d’expression, méthode de pensée et art d’action.”³² For Descotes, all of Pascal’s writings are examples of an art of persuasive discursive reasoning that always bear an intention of truth, whether in the demonstrative or non-demonstrative mode. Hugh M. Davidson, however, has recently noted the significant difference in types of truth claim made in Pascal’s writings. The primary distinction is between geometric and non-geometric forms of discursive reasoning. Davidson argues that the realm of rhetoric coincides with that of non-geometric practical reason, which does not aspire to the transcendent values of truth and falsehood, to the truth of things, but to flexible human-centered values. This seminal distinction marks rhetoric’s difference from epistemological modes of reasoning.³³

In addition to analyses of the effects of persuasive discourse,³⁴ several scholars have been attentive to the production of rhetorical, persuasive discourse in Pascal, and they have argued cogently that the will is its source.³⁵ As Louis Marin has shown, for Pascal, whenever the will of the concupiscent subject is present in discourse as the subject of enunciation, the rhetoric of persuasion has

begun.³⁶ Under these circumstances, the referential meaning of this subject's rhetorical statements is merely the substantial projection or concretization of desire, an imaginary substitute for the truth of things in themselves. But it is most important to note that in the analyses of Pascal and the logicians of Port-Royal, the rhetoric of persuasion functions as a *modality* of language, and its discourses function as speech acts rather than as fallacious statements of fact. Such rhetorical language is founded on performative acts of positing, and language in this case labors as a semiotic code rather than as a cognitive and referential system. It is also for this reason that the rhetoric of persuasion poses an epistemological threat, for rhetorical discourse does not precisely state falsehoods, but instead the performative language of persuasion is to the side of questions of truth and falsehood. The rhetorical and performative use of language does not refer transitively to the outside world: it is self-referential, that is, it refers to itself as an act of speech.

In the second section of this study, I trace the way in which rhetorical persuasion as a performative modality of language emerges to usurp the place of all other discursive forms in Pascal's writings, and thus the language of his texts no longer functions within a cognitive and referential system but within a semiotic code. Once again, this observation cannot lead to the formulation of a doctrine of rhetoric that governs the texts of Pascal, for we encounter in those texts resistances to the constitution of this doctrine itself. First, the metadiscourse that would tell us how performative language acts, that would regulate normatively its functioning, and that would tell us precisely how it differs from cognitive language, turns out to be just another example of the performative use of language, and thus it disqualifies its own status as metadiscursive cognition. Second, the performative use of language denies while requiring the referential function, for its *self*-reference is merely a variant of reference. The meaning of the performative act lies in this self-reference, in its inscription within a constat on itself as a linguistic act or in the translation of the act itself into referential meaning. This step is necessary, the necessary interpretation of the meaning of the performative, but this is precisely the possibility that the act itself disqualifies. This must always be the case because the suppression of the referential and cognitive constat is the very condition of possibility of the act itself. The rhetoric of persuasion in Pascal consequently becomes performative before any performance or act is possible.

Here again, the question of Pascal and rhetoric is the question of the possible articulation of a corpus of writings with a doctrine of rhetoric. I argue in this study that the texts of Pascal, the exemplary rhetor, can neither state nor exemplify an historically circumscribed rhetorical doctrine. Rhetoric, then, can no longer participate in any periodized convergence of the members of the trivium.

Instead, the texts of Pascal merely dramatize a linguistic predicament; namely, the failure to come to terms with their own tropological motions and enunciative modalities. Rhetoric in the works of Pascal opens the theoretical question of the production of structures and modalities of signification that are irreducible to any totalizing and normative doctrine, whether positive or negative. The essays that follow chart the places in which these problems are broached in Pascal's speculative, scientific, philosophical, and theological writings.

NOTES

1. Walter J. Ong, S.J., 110-14.

2. Ong, 110.

3. For Foucault the periodizing concept of the *epistémê* must not be conflated with either the synthetic and unifying themes of the history of ideas (e.g., reason, scientificity, and so on) or with granting privileged status to one mode of discourse that stands as the simple statement of the norms of all others (e.g., logic in that it is more "rational," "objective," and "scientific"). Instead, the *epistémê* delimits the conditions of possibility of discursive practices, the rules and laws that govern their multiple formations. The difficult and often elusive concept of the *epistémê* encompasses the collection of relations that unite discursive practices and allow epistemological and formal systems to take shape in a given period. Nevertheless, in listing the ways in which the laws governing discursive formations can be enunciated for a given period, Foucault argues in *L'Archéologie du savoir* that one discourse can serve as a "concrete model" for other discursive domains when raised to the level of generality. Significantly, the one concrete example cited is grammar in the Classical age, which serves as the model for the representational sign and its functioning in general (88). Moreover, this concrete model, in conjunction with its complementary logic, serves as such for the discourses of natural history and the analysis of wealth, which complete the fields of discursive practice for the Classical *epistémê* in *Les Mots et les choses*.

4. See Foucault's account of the mastertropes metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche, as secondary and derivative operators of displacement that the system of representation must hold in check in order to safeguard the stable and originary relations binding word-things (*Les Mots et les choses*, 129-31).

5. Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, 13.

6. Pierre Kuentz, "La Rhétorique ou la mise à l'écart," 146-47.

7. Marc Fumaroli, esp. 1-34. Most histories of rhetoric concur with Fumaroli's analysis. Peter France's study of rhetoric in the Ancien Régime begins from the premise that the seventeenth century represents the decisive period of transition from the more comprehensive Aristotelian rhetoric, which includes

inventio and *dispositio*, to the Ramist-inspired rhetoric that is restricted to *elocutio*. The seventeenth century is the inaugural moment of “the constant tendency in modern times to regard rhetoric merely as a theory of stylistic ornament” (Peter France, 16). This general tendency to limit the field of rhetoric to style, to figures and tropes, was coupled with heightened attention accorded to its role in effecting persuasion. Thomas Conley, for example, has noted in the Jesuits’ rhetorics of the early seventeenth century and in subsequent rhetorics, such as Lamy’s *Art de parler*, the increased focus on “expressive” elements of style in their capacity to move the passions and the wills of men (Conley, 151-81). Similarly, Brian Vickers notes that in the seventeenth century “the ultimate power of rhetoric in written communication was thought to reside in figures and tropes,” and again attention is directed to their expressive function and their power to produce an affective and aesthetic response (294).

8. A. Kibédi-Varga, 7-17.

9. Kibédi-Varga, 60-69.

10. Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *La Logique ou l’art de penser*, (*La Logique de Port-Royal*), 226-27. Hereafter, all unannotated references are given parenthetically; spelling in all citations has been modernized.

11. Gérard Genette, “La Rhétorique restreinte,” *Figures III*, 2 1-40.

12. For example, in Bary’s *Rhetorique française*, dialogue is a formal, stylistic, and rhetorical device that functions in discourse as an identifiable figure named—unsurprisingly—“dialogisme” (218).

13. Roland Barthes, “L’Ancienne rhétorique,” *L’Aventure sémiologique*, 118.

14. Wilbur Samuel Howell, 146-281.

15. The logicians articulate their position on disposition and the art of discourse in general in the preliminary discourse to the first edition, where they argue for the freedom to organize and arrange thoughts discursively, like a typesetter the letters of his press. The logicians insist, however, that such disposition should be conducted in the most natural manner (*Logique de Port-Royal*, 24).

16. Fénelon, 39-41.

17. Gilberte Périer, “La vie de M. Pascal,” *OCL* 23b.

18. Pierre Nicole, “Eloge de Pascal,” in Tourneur, 36.

19. Blaise Pascal, *Les Provinciales; ou les lettres écrites par Louis de Montalte à un provincial de ses amis et aux RR. PP. Jésuites*, (*Lettres Provinciales*), *OCL* 379a.

20. Barthes, 116.

21. Blaise Pascal, *Réflexions sur la géométrie en general: de l’esprit géométrique et de l’art de persuader*, *OCL* 356a/*De l’esprit géométrique*, *OCM* 3: 416. Mesnard’s choice of “De l’esprit géométrique” as the title of the work—

and not as a subject heading—in his edition of Pascal’s works is based on speculation on the hand that wrote the title in the autograph manuscript. As this text is not extant, Mesnard’s argument is not decisive, and consequently I have chosen to retain “Réflexions sur la géométrie en général,” which in fact heads the manuscript copy, as the title. Hereafter, wherever possible I list after the Lafuma edition the reference to Mesnard’s as yet uncompleted edition.

22. In the chronology based on his edition of the *Pensées*, Philippe Sellier notes that most of the fragments on language and style are part of the first and oldest dossiers written, and that the composition of these fragments precedes the creation of rubrics for the 1658 classification of the dossiers of the apology. Sellier concludes that the priority granted by Pascal to his reflections on rhetoric emblemizes the importance accorded to this art in his writings in general (Philippe Sellier, “Rhétorique et apologie: Dieu parle bien de Dieu”).

23. Respectively: Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, OCL 582b-583a; Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Philippe Sellier, 379-80. The Lafuma edition, based on the first copy of the manuscript of the *Pensées*, and the Sellier edition, based on the second, are the most widely accepted at this time, although the Sellier edition is arguably the more scholarly valid because it restricts itself to reproducing the unedited copy retained by Pascal’s sister, Gilberte Périer. Hereafter, all references to the *Pensées* are given parenthetically by fragment number for the Lafuma and Sellier editions respectively.

24. See especially: Mary Maggioni, Patricia Topliss.

25. See especially: Hugh M. Davidson, *Audience, Words, and Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century French Rhetoric*; Dominique Descotes; and Hyung-Kil Kim.

26. Edouard Morot-Sir, 41, 127-28.

27. “La vérité ne peut être donnée à l’homme que par et dans le langage de Dieu; la seule connaissance possible est la réflexion de ce langage de Dieu en l’homme” (Morot-Sir, 47).

28. Sara Melzer, 142.

29. Melzer, 142.

30. Melzer attempts to dissociate her position from negative theology; however, her repeated claims about the “inexpressibility” of God and the inability “to represent him adequately” and directly, but only through figural ‘negative representation’ (143), cannot be taken any other way. Melzer’s argument is always based on maintaining such polar opposites as truth/figure, presence/absence, in which the latter is maintained as the symmetrical opposite of the unattainable former. The negative knowledge to which she subscribes as the truth of Pascal’s writings is also evident in her use of the term *aporia*, which owes considerably more to Goldmann’s tragic vision and negative theology

than, as she claims, to Paul de Man. For Meizer, aporia constitutes an impossible choice between two competing alternatives, two polar opposites. For example, Melzer argues that man's fall from truth into figural language generates two "metalinguistic" and narrativized attempts to understand this predicament: 1), the story of faith, according to which "our interpretation of figures transcends language and discloses the truth;" and 2), the story of doubt and uncertainty, according to which "interpretation discloses only the signs with which it produces a notion of God" (142). Man's fallen condition results in a "linguistic" predicament by which it is impossible to choose which of the polar opposites is true, which story is the story of human, figural language. In fact, aporia, in de Man's sense, as I argue in Chapter 4, does not precisely concern an impossible choice between two competing interpretive possibilities. Aporia concerns instead that moment when, in the rhetoric of the text, it becomes impossible to establish the poles of this interpretive choice. For example, in Chapter 4 of this study—and following my reading of de Man's argument—I show that the true moment of aporia in the *Pensées* occurs when the text fails to establish just what the choice in its rhetorical, enunciative modes is. The "choice" is "impossible" not because we cannot make it—that is, not because we cannot decide between the two—and rest secure in this negative knowledge, but because the text makes it impossible to establish the very poles of the choice. This predicament cannot be reduced to a metalinguistic cognition.

31. Jacques Derrida, "La Mythologie blanche," *Marges de la philosophie*, 247-324.

32. Descotes, 18.

33. Hugh M. Davidson, *Pascal and the Arts of the Mind*, esp. 210-47.

34. See especially: Georges Van Den Abbeele, 320-38. Van Den Abbeele examines the ways in which the *Pensées* dramatizes its own perlocutionary function, that is, the desire to persuade and to convert.

35. Martin Warner, for example, traces persuasive rhetorical reasoning's appropriate and inappropriate modes in Pascal based on its derivation from *sentiment* and *finesse*, in the former case, and imagination or other types of concupiscent desire in the latter (152-208).

36. Louis Marin, *La Critique du discours*, 339-63.